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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000748

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [SNAR](#) [GV](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN EMBASSY FRUSTRATED WITH GUINEAN GOVERNMENT

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

11. (C) SUMMARY. A recent discussion with a senior Nigerian Embassy official suggests that the Government of Nigeria is increasingly frustrated with the Guinean Government and unsympathetic to the country's political and economic struggles. Contact highlighted concerns over increased crime rates, a growing lack of discipline within the military, and a generally weak government. He called for greater multilateral pressure from the diplomatic community to encourage the Guinean Government to move more aggressively towards necessary reforms. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Poloff met with the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Nigerian Embassy on December 4, Mr. P.I. Iyamabo (Minister Counselor) to exchange views on Guinea's current political situation. Reflecting on his two years in Conakry, Iyamabo commented that Guinea is traversing a particularly volatile period. He said that the country's main problem is an overwhelming lack of leadership. "Everybody does exactly what he wants...you can go to the prime minister and he will tell you what you want to hear, but in reality, he is completely ineffective," he said. According to Iyamabo, nothing is likely to change in Guinea until President Conte leaves office.

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OVERWHELMING MILITARY PRESENCE  
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13. (C) Turning to the military, Iyamabo said that "what I find particularly disgusting here is the overwhelming presence of the military." He said that despite claims to the contrary, Guinea has never effectively transitioned from military rule to civilian rule. Iyamabo commented that the military remains the Guinean Government's strongest institution, but the institution itself has not transformed as one would expect in an evolving democracy. "Military personnel are everywhere, even performing police duties," he said. He then questioned if the strong military presence was not a deliberate government tactic to foster fear among civilians.

14. (C) Commenting on the president's health, Iyamabo said "if this man dies today, I cannot tell you what will happen in this country." He commented on the fundamental weakness of the republican institutions, and asserted that the military is the only institution strong enough to assert itself and restore order.

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TIME TO FACE THE FACTS  
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15. (C) Iyamabo also expressed frustration over Guineans' frequently passive approach to democracy and government. "We are in a situation wherein Guineans are simply not ready to face the facts of nation building -- they cannot keep sitting

around and waiting for others to do everything for them," he said.

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FOCUS ON NIGERIAN CITIZENS  
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¶16. (C) When Poloff asked about Nigeria's bilateral approach to Guinea, Iyamabo said that Nigeria generally respects a policy of non-interference in other country's affairs. He noted that Nigeria is providing some financial assistance for elections, but is otherwise focused on taking care of Nigerian citizens.

¶17. (C) Poloff remarked on the recent death of a Nigerian citizen who was reportedly killed by bandits a few weeks ago. Iyamabo said that armed men in military attire attacked the Nigerian in his own home, in front of his wife and daughter. The man later died at the hospital from his wounds. Iyamabo disputed local police claims that the main had been linked to drug trafficking, saying only that he did not know him personally, but that he had an excellent reputation.

¶18. (C) Iyamabo said that Guinean police forces frequently try to give the impression that Nigerians are heavily involved in drug trafficking in Guinea, but that the police are being disingenuous, effectively trying to draw attention away from the fact that many Guineans are involved in the business. "I agree that we have a few bad eggs, but Nigerians are not criminals and there are very few of us involved in this business in Guinea," he said. He commented that most of the Nigerians (between 7000 and 8000) living in

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Guinea are peacefully pursuing private economic interests.

¶19. (C) Stating that the Guinean police force is extremely corrupt and underpaid, Iyamabo said that police officials often target Nigerians and other foreigners in order to extort small amounts of money. "Nigerians have one fault and that is that we are too loud -- when we are happy, we make a lot of noise and everyone knows it -- that makes us stand out as foreigners and the Guineans think we have lots of money," he said.

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MORE DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE NEEDED  
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¶10. (C) Turning to the diplomatic community in Guinea, Iyamabo said that the community as a whole lacks leadership because the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps (the Palestinian Ambassador) is not active enough. "He's more Guinean than Palestinian at this point," he said, adding "we need a concerted, powerful message, but we won't get that with him."

Iyamabo said that the Nigerian Embassy has recently been very active in regularly bringing together ECOWAS ambassadors in order to develop a stronger bond, and a stronger diplomatic position with respect to Guinea. He noted that they had recently conducted a joint demarche to the Prime Minister and Army Chief of Staff, although he did not specify the topic of the demarche. Iyamabo said that the United States Government also has a great deal of influence, which can be used in a positive way to push the Guinean Government towards a better democracy.

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COMMENT  
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¶11. (C) The Nigerian diplomat seemed to be losing patience with the current Guinean regime, echoing comments made by many other diplomats in recent months. He was concerned about an increasing lack of security, the lack of discipline within the military, and the difficulty of effectively dealing with the Guinean Government on a bilateral level.

Iyamabo's comments suggest that, like most of the G8 community in Guinea, Nigeria is both frustrated and worried about Guinea's current political situation -- and not necessarily sympathetic to a fellow African nation's struggles. END COMMENT.  
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